

Armed with a background of playing in local bands, local theatre, interning at radio station WGSW (before the term "intern" meant free labor), and earning a degree in English from Lander (then) College, I moved from South Carolina to Nashville in late 1965 to participate in any way functional in the wonderful activity underway at that point. In addition to working as a musician and an actor, I was steadily involved as a freelance entertainment journalist from early '66 until ending my PERFORMANCE Magazine affiliation in 1994, although I continue with a small newsletter, thebridgeworks, that enables friends from various periods to stay in touch.

Throughout the years, efforts to focus on my songwriting and performing were thwarted by the question "Where would this fit on radio?" The Internet, with access to independent stations and direct contact to the public, has enabled me to have more music activity in the past two years than in the previous thirty, even including a seven-year period when I was signed as an exclusive songwriter with Glaser Publications. So writing ABOUT music and music people provided me with a way to be useful. It also required parttime jobs and for my wife to work; music journalism pays pitifully.

I sincerely miss the personal connection I felt with local AND major market radio when I was a kid and into early adulthood. Even though I was not a recording artist, I performed live and was something of a local personality, often invited to visit on the air at various stations. My early years in Nashville included a number of guest appearances and interviews on WSM, no less -- I wrote the liner notes for Vernon Oxford's first album and was interviewed by Bob Laughlin. Grant Turner was a friend and frequently worked me into his programming. Today I still have friends at that radio station but I fully understand that I do not fill the bill for airtime, no matter how interesting I may be deemed.

It's also distressing that WSM has THE most massive library of historical music one could imagine, by virtue of all those years of the Grand Ole Opry and so many other live shows that came from there as far back as the '40s, yet the current program director stopped the Saturday morning show on which Eddy Stubbs played and discussed that music. It amounts to a major museum shuffling all the masterpieces to storage space and exhibiting only what's in style. All for the cause of desired demographics, although people of ALL demographics live in ALL local communities. Obviously, Radio as an institution has shifted from giving a rip about the local community to caring mostly about the advertising rates determined by ratings with desired demographics.

Pretty danged sad.

What can be done about it? I don't know, but it feels good to think SOMEBODY in government cares. Thank you, Bill Littleton

